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AUTHOR Cote, Lawrence S.
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ABSTRACT

In early 1983, a survey was conducted among the presidents and board chairpersons of the 14 public community colleges in Pennsylvania, asking respondents to rate the level of importance of 20 presidential roles based on their institution's needs during the 1982-83 academic year. During a joint annual meeting of Pennsylvania community college trustees and presidents, the identical survey was completed by attendees, based on projected institutional needs for 1986-87. Respondents rated the importance of the president's role as public relations specialist/image builder, financial manager, student liaison/mentor, marketer/salesperson, fund raiser, labor relations specialist, academic planner/innovator, administrator/executive, symbol/ceremonial official, consensus builder/mediator, community leader, trustee rapport builder/advisor, government liaison/resource stimulator, visionary/long-range planner, scholar/teacher, physical plant/property overseer, alumni liaison/motivator, faculty advocate, educational advocate, and interinstitutional diplomat. Study findings included the following: (1) in both 1983 and 1986, there was very strong consensus between trustees and presidents about the relative importance of roles; (2) for three roles, there was consistent dissensus for both survey periods (i.e., financial manager and community leader, which presidents perceived as more important; and interinstitutional diplomat, which trustees viewed as more important); and (3) in 1986, there was less consensus than in 1983 over the relative importance of the following roles: government liaison/resource stimulator, consensus builder/mediator, symbol/ceremonial official, and marketer/salesperson. The survey instrument is included. (RO)

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The Successful Presidency as a Shared Responsibility

Abstract of Remarks and Survey Data
for distribution to
Pennsylvania Community College Presidents and Trustees

Prepared for:
Pennsylvania Association of Colleges and Universities
Commission for Community Colleges

Prepared by:
Dr. Lawrence S. Cote

(Based on presentation given at the Joint Annual Meeting of the Commission for Community Colleges and Pennsylvania Federation of Community College Trustees, June 12-14, 1986, Pocono Manor, PA.)

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ABSTRACT

The Successful Presidency as a Shared Responsibility

The effective college presidency is, or can be (maybe, should be) a shared responsibility--shared by the board and the president. American college presidents, particularly in public institutions, occupy one of the most demanding, difficult and poorly understood leadership roles in our society. And, as Clark Kerr's Association of Governing Boards of Colleges and Universities sponsored Commission on Strengthening Presidential Leadership has observed, the situation seems to be worsening. The Commission panel further suggested that "rescuing it" lies more with trustees, faculty, and public officials than with presidents (Jacobson, 1984).

Incidentially, presidential assessment, in the sense that it is popularly understood, is not being advocated here. That is, broad-based, essentially media-events in which presidents are subjected to public evaluation by a variety of constituencies--generally centered on or facilitated by the board--is not the most effective road to ensuring a successful presidency. In most cases, such approaches cause more harm than good.

But the sometimes tragic irony is that presidents seem to adhere doggedly to the assumption that they must 'go it alone.' Presidents seem to perceive that it is them--rather than the job--that is the problem, if a problem exists with fulfilling expectations.

Trustees do have the responsibility to assist the leader they have chosen to be effective and successful--primarily through initial and ongoing mutual

clarification and agreement upon the priorities among the many functions required of presidents. This is not to suggest that trustees should become involved operationally in the week to week administration and leadership of the campus--nor is constant second-guessing of the president's decision-making warranted. Many reports we read of stormy board-president relationships seem to be based in boards being either over-involved or uninvolved in the life of the institution. A failed presidency seems to be often the result of an inappropriately developed board-president relationship: a failure by either party, or both, to embrace the uniquely American invention of a chief operational officer who is hired, guided and supported by a lay board of control.

Although the academic presidency has been discussed often (there has been a virtual mountain of literature produced throughout this century), most of that literature is merely conjecture, no matter how astute the observations. Little substantive research on the position has been produced (with some recent exceptions). The presidential role in larger research universities and elite liberal arts colleges has received the most attention by commentators and researchers. Community college presidencies have received relatively little attention.

The recently reported study of the community college presidency conducted by George Vaughan, president of Piedmont Virginia Community College, is one example of increasing attention to this sector. Using data drawn from a survey of nearly 600 and interviews with about 100 of his colleagues, Vaughan's study suggests:

1. like their four year brethern, community college presidents are subject to the stress and pressure that come from expanding external roles and responsibilities;
2. Trustees sometimes place special strains on presidents--referring to keeping the lines clear between college administration and policy making (Heller, 1986).

Dr. David Leslie, Professor and Head of the educational leadership department at Flordia State University, Tallahassee, is looking at the president's position from a general perspective and in a way which contributes to our understanding of how these leaders function. He observes that:

> The president has little time or opportunity for reflective thought or contemplation or even planning. The president simply faces imperatives to act and must be able to move in ways that cause things to "come out right."...
>
> ...Who the president <u>is</u>, in the full existential sense of the term, makes a difference in what the institution becomes. The president's performance--in this context--is very much assessed in action terms (Leslie, 1986).

<u>Overwhelming Demands Placed Upon Presidents</u>

The job of president of an American college or university is multi-faceted. Expectations for how a president should function and which of many presidential roles should be emphasized abound and vary with the many constitutencies served by the president. As William

Wenrich (1980, 37-40) has observed:

> Many of the difficulties associated with the presidency have to do with opposing demands. The president simultaneously seeks to serve and attend to the needs and interests of students, faculty, other administrators, trustees, business/industrial groups, and the community at large. The position is enshrouded with ambiguity, which serves as defense mechanism against the many and varied groups and individuals who seek something from the institution.

A slightly more cynical description of the situation has been offered by John Nason, former president of Swarthmore (1980, p. 13):

> The presidency is expected to be an educator, to have been at some time a scholar, to have judgment about finance, to know something of construction, maintenance and labor policy, to speak virtually continuously in words that charm but never offend, to take bold positions with which no one will disagree, to consult everyone and follow all proffered advice, and do everything through committees, but with great speed and without error.

Making the assumption that we have a multitude of exceedingly diverse expectations for college and university presidents, which can be overwhelming, is basic to the assertion that presidents require board assistance in sharing the burdens of office. The popular management theorist, Peter Drucker, at one time characterized the position as "unfit for human beings" (1966, 79). It could be argued that this may, for some

situations, be overstated. But the implication for board members is, as noted earlier, that they must be clear initially in communicating their sense of priorities and, on an ongoing basis, must engage in mutual clarification and priority setting with their institution's executive officer.

Furthermore, the assumption of multiple and diverse role expectations also suggests that presidents have a responsibility to accept cognitively, and emotionally, the potentially inhuman demands of their positions. A willingness to seek creatively the advice, guidance and support of their boards in assessing jointly presidential priorities is fundamental to the realization of consensus on presidential role priorities.

Pennsylvania Community Colleges: Role Consensus or Dissensus?

The two surveys. In February through March of 1983 a survey was conducted among the presidents and board chairpersons of the 14 public Pennsylvania community colleges--as well as all other Pennsylvania institutions. (It was preceeded by a pilot study among 28 New Jersey two and four year institutions.) Participants were asked to rate the level of importance of each of 20 presidential roles. The 20 role set--Presidential Roles Profile and Survey--is generally descriptive of the primary job activities or tasks of most college and university presidents. (See Attachment A.) Of the 28 targeted respondents, 24 responded (12 presidents, 12 board chairperson).

During the joint annual meeting of the Pennsylvania Federation of Community College Trustees and Community

College Commission (the presidents) in June, 1986, the identical Presidential Roles Profile and Survey was completed by all institution presidents in attendance (nine of fourteen) and all trustees present at the time (23 usable responses). In 1983, each survey participant rated the importance of each role based upon the institution's needs during the 1982-83 academic year; in June, 1986, based upon the institution's projected needs during the 1986-87 academic year. In each case the numerical responses for each group were aggregated and mean (average) ratings were determined which yielded a group "importance rating" for each presidential role (1=very important, 5=very unimportant). Those data are shown in Attachment B.

Those numerical "importance ratings" were then converted to rankings for each role. "Lack of Consensus" was determined based on a rather arbitrary gap of four or more in role rankings between the two groups of respondents.

Interpreting the data. There is quite a bit of data, a variety of technical issues associated with possible problems in survey instrument design and data analysis and there were differences in the environment in which each survey was conducted and in the groups which participated in each survey--all of which suggest caution when interpreting and comparing the survey results. But the data do provide some indiction of the general levels of perceived presidential role importance between presidents and trustees and some indication of changing perceptions during the past three years.

The greater value of such an exercise would be if the Presidential Role Profile and Survey were simply used as a tool to facilitate discussion between one

institution's board and its president. The goal, afterall, is to share perceptions and mutually agree upon presidential role priorities, thereby sharing the burdens, and responsibility, for a successful presidency.

Given the caveats noted some general observations may be made:

Role consensus. In both 1983 and 1986 there was very strong consensus between trustees and presidents about the relative importance of roles within the overall role profile--a very positive indicator that there is a good basic foundation for further discussion among presidents and trustees. These findings are consistent with those obtained in the pilot study in New Jersey in 1982 and broader higher education community throughout Pennsylvania in 1983. There is also strong consistency within each group, 1983 to 1986. Most roles were ranked similarly during each survey.

From 1983 to 1986 there also seems to be growing consensus between presidents and trustees about the importance of three of the roles where lack of consensus was originally indicated in 1983 (see Academic Planner/Innovator, Faculty Advocate and Visionary).

Lack of consensus about role importance. There are three presidential roles for which dissensus about their relative importance has remained constant for both survey periods: Financial Manager (perceived to be of significantly greater importance by presidents); Community Leader (also perceived by presidents to be significantly more important than as viewed by trustees); and Interinstitutional Diplomat (viewed by presidents to be less important than as viewed by trustees). Furthermore, lack of consensus about

presidential role importance is suggested in four instances in 1986 where consensus seemed to exist previously: (1) Government Liaison/Resource Stimulator was viewed by presidents in both surveys to be highly important yet trustees perceive it to be a less important presidential activity in 1986; (2) presidents perceive Consensus Builder/Mediator to be of less relative importance in 1986 although trustees continue to perceive it to be of moderately high importance; (3) Symbol/Ceremonial Official declined significantly in importance in the view of trustees, 1983 to 1986, while presidents continue to view it of moderate importance; and finally, (4) trustees view Marketer/Salesperson as an extremely important presidential role in 1986 although presidents appear to continue to view it as moderately important relative to other tasks and responsibilities.

Summary

Although there was general consistency among ratings of levels of importance for each role across institutions there were also some widely divergent responses for particular individuals at particular institutions for specific roles. As indicated, it appears the Presidential Roles Profile and Survey would have its highest utility when employed as a tool to assist individual presidents and their boards to identify general areas where their discussion might focus.

The statewide data may be of greater use to PACU staff and leadership of the Commission for Community Colleges and Pennsylvania Federation of Community College Trustees. As both groups of leaders continue their work on behalf of Pennsylvania's community

colleges and the citizens served by those institutions, the data reported here may suggest further discussion to clarify missions and purposes of those two organizations (e.g., as suggested by differing presidential and trustee views on the importance of the Government Liaison/Resource Stimulator function--understood to be a task expectation for most presidents of public institutions). Lack of consensus in other areas may also suggest topics for discussion at further joint or separate meetings of presidents and trustees.

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For more detailed information about the 1983 Presidential Roles Survey conducted among all Pennsylvania colleges and universities see:

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Cote, L.S. The Relative Importance of Presidential Roles. Journal of Higher Education, 56, 6 (November-December, 1985), 664-676.

Attachment A

Presidential Roles

A Survey Conducted Among Pennsylvania Community College Presidents and Trustees at their Joint Annual Meeting, June 12-14, 1986

Your responses will be strictly confidential. They will be read only by Dr. Lawrence S. Cote and reported in grouped summaries (grouped by all presidents/all trustees) as part of his presentation at your annual meeting. The code on the cover is to simply sort responses by presidents and trustees.

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PRESIDENTIAL ROLES SURVEY

Introduction/Instructions

The job of the college president can be viewed as being composed of a variety of roles, each competing for the limited time and attention of the president. Inevitably, these roles--or more accurately, the job activities or tasks they represent--must be fulfilled in some priority order based on how critical each is in addressing the overall needs of the institution.

For the purpose of this survey, a number of presidential roles have been selected, named and briefly described. You are being asked to rate the degree of importance of each role. It is recognized that this rating of presidential roles by importance may change drastically from one year to another, possibly from one hour to another. Please base your decisions in rating the roles on your perception of the overall needs of your institution during the 1986-87 academic year, viewed as one "slice in time" at this particular juncture in your institution's history and development.

Twenty (20) roles often fulfilled by college presidents are named and described. The roles are listed in random order. Please consider each role as distinct--although in "real life" they may well blend together in a variety of ways. It is also understood that to varying degrees tasks related to these presidential roles may be delegated to others. Although role descriptions are provided as generalized guides, rate the role according to your understanding of the actual role as it is fulfilled within your institution.

The rating for each role may or may not reflect the degree of importance placed on that role currently by the president; the rating should reflect your view, as either a president or trustee, of how important that presidential role should be to your institution during the 1986-87 academic year. Assume that roles rated higher may be fulfilled effectively at the possible expense of those rated lower.

A pencil with eraser is recommended to simplify changes.

Role "names" suggest the "flavor" of the roles. Role descriptions are only guides to assist you to discriminate among roles. Specific role descriptions may vary somewhat at your institution.
(Circle only one number per role. Please "rate" all roles.)

1 means VERY IMPORTANT (VI)
2 means SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT (SI)
3 means AVERAGE IMPORTANCE (AI)
4 means SOMEWHAT UNIMPORTANT (UI)
5 means VERY UNIMPORTANT (VU)

	(Circle Number)				
	VI	SI	AI	SU	VU
1. P.R. SPECIALIST/IMAGE BUILDER	1	2	3	4	5

promoting a positive institutional image through speech-making, news releases, events to attract people to the institution; direct involvement in strategic planning for this purpose (a more "softsell" than "hardsell" approach to advancing the institution)

2. FINANCIAL MANAGER	1	2	3	4	5

annual budget development, approval, and management; direct intervention in fiscal issues relative to operating budget and investment fund(s) controlled by the institution (focus is on the shorter term, detailed involvement in fiscal areas--but may also include longer term financial planning, resource development)

3. STUDENT LIAISON/MENTOR	1	2	3	4	5

meeting with organized and informal student groups, individual students, student leaders, parent-student groups; advising, counselling, influencing students directly

4. MARKETER/SALESPERSON	1	2	3	4	5

selling the institution--primarily externally; strategically selling and promoting the services of the institution to potential supporters and clients (a more "hardsell" than "softsell" approach to advancing the institution)

5. FUND RAISER	1	2	3	4	5

direct contact with major donors--both individuals and organizations (business and philanthropic); personally soliciting funds and planning and coordinating this activity

Role "names" suggest the "flavor" of the roles. Role descriptions are only guides to assist you to discriminate among roles. Specific role descriptions may vary somewhat at your institution.
(Circle only one number per role. Please "rate" all roles.)

1 means VERY IMPORTANT (VI)
2 means SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT (SI)
3 means AVERAGE IMPORTANCE (AI)
4 means SOMEWHAT UNIMPORTANT (UI)
5 means VERY UNIMPORTANT (VU)

	(Circle Number)				
	VI	SI	AI	SU	VU
6. LABOR RELATIONS SPECIALIST	1	2	3	4	5
negotiating, maintaining employee organization contracts; development and implementation of collective bargaining strategy; handling media relative to organized employee bargaining					
7. ACADEMIC PLANNER INNOVATOR	1	2	3	4	5
planning, altering curriculum, academic schedules; establishing or dismantling academic programs; stimulating research; framing and carrying out the teaching and scholarly policies of the institution; influencing the educational program					
8. ADMINISTRATOR/EXECUTIVE	1	2	3	4	5
directing work of others, managing day-to-day operations, holding staff meetings; reviewing, initiating operational policies; responding to correspondence; hiring, evaluating staff and faculty; establishing and maintaining a productive organizational climate					
9. SYMBOL/CEREMONIAL OFFICIAL	1	2	3	4	5
functioning as focus of positive or negative feelings, actions directed at the institution; representing the institution in all matters of formality					
10. CONSENSUS BUILDER/MEDIATOR	1	2	3	4	5
resolving interpersonal and intergroup conflict; keeping the peace and furthering progress; facilitating consensus within the institutional environment					

Role "names" suggest the "flavor" of the roles. Role descriptions are only guides to assist you to discriminate among roles. Specific role descriptions may vary somewhat at your institution.
(Circle only one number per role. Please "rate" all roles.)

1 means VERY IMPORTANT (VI)
2 means SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT (SI)
3 means AVERAGE IMPORTANCE (AI)
4 means SOMEWHAT UNIMPORTANT (UI)
5 means VERY UNIMPORTANT (VU)

	(Circle Number)				
	VI	SI	AI	SU	VU
11. COMMUNITY LEADER	1	2	3	4	5
engaging in community, not necessarily educational, activities (serving on hospital boards, business boards of directors, commissions, service clubs, volunteer work); involvement in issues of local, regional or national concern—not generally educational in nature					
12. TRUSTEE RAPPORT BUILDER/ADVISOR	1	2	3	4	5
building good relationships with trustees, helping trustees define policy issues; acclimating board members to their trusteeship and the institution; formal and informal interaction with trustees; recruiting new trustees					
13. GOVERNMENT LIAISON/RESOURCE STIMULATOR	1	2	3	4	5
influencing local, regional, state or national elected or appointed government officials on behalf of the institution; developing relationships with these officials; lobbying for resources and support					
14. VISIONARY/LONG RANGE PLANNER	1	2	3	4	5
clarifying, formulating or adhering to the mission(s) of the institution; elaborating a vision of the institution, getting people behind it, making it happen; long range planning with a "situation-as-a-whole" perspective					
15. SCHOLAR/TEACHER	1	2	3	4	5
contributions to and involvement with specific scholarly fields; writing, research, reading in specific fields; collaboration with fellow scholars; teaching in areas of expertise at home institution or others; presentations at scholarly meetings					

Role "names" suggest the "flavor" of the roles. Role descriptions are only guides to assist you to discriminate among roles. Specific role descriptions may vary somewhat at your institution.
(Circle only one number per role. Please "rate" all roles.)

1 means VERY IMPORTANT (VI)
2 means SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT (SI)
3 means AVERAGE IMPORTANCE (AI)
4 means SOMEWHAT UNIMPORTANT (UI)
5 means VERY UNIMPORTANT (VU)

	(Circle Number)				
	VI	SI	AI	SU	VU
16. PHYSICAL PLANT/PROPERTY OVERSEER	1	2	3	4	5
direct involvement in planning, developing, improving, maintaining buildings, real estate, other facilities and property, utilities					
17. ALUMNI LIAISON/MOTIVATOR	1	2	3	4	5
presenting or representing alumni interests/views; meetings with individual alumni or presentations to alumni groups; institutional advancement directed to alumni					
18. FACULTY ADVOCATE	1	2	3	4	5
preserving academic freedom, due process, fair play as they affect faculty; interpreting role of faculty to trustees and other constituencies; advocating fair wages, opportunities for research for faculty; presenting or representing faculty views before trustees or other constituencies; direct contact with faculty					
19. EDUCATIONAL ADVOCATE	1	2	3	4	5
activities involving keeping the idea of higher education "before the people;" general public advocacy of education at all levels; involvement in public discussion concerning educational issues of a general nature					
20. INTERINSTITUTIONAL DIPLOMAT	1	2	3	4	5
developing relationships with other postsecondary institutions; cooperatively defining "turf" among institutions; negotiating joint ventures with other institutions; participation in local, regional or national associations, consortia; direct interaction with other institutions' executives					

Please proceed to page six (6).

Having now "rated" each role you may wish to quickly review the twenty (20) ratings to determine if you would like to raise or lower the "importance rating" of a particular role due to its relative importance to other roles.

Finally, is there anything else you would to say about the relative importance of the roles the president of a college fulfills? If so, please use this space and the rear cover for that purpose.

Also, any comments you wish to make that you think may be helpful in future efforts to understand the nature of the president's functions and the ways in which trustees and presidents may together ensure effective and successful presidencies will be appreciated.

ATTACHMENT B

IMPORTANCE OF PRESIDENTIAL ROLES
VIEWS OF PENNSYLVANIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE
PRESIDENTS AND TRUSTEES (14 Institutions)

LACK OF CONSENSUS:
1983 + 1986 [a]
1986 only [b]
1983 only [c]

	PRESIDENTS				TRUSTEES			
	1983 (n = 12)		1986 (n = 9)		1983 (n = 12)		1986 (n = 23)	
PRESIDENTIAL ROLES*	M	RANK	M	RANK	M	RANK	M	RANK
(O) P. R. Specialist	1.25	1	1.11	3	1.25	1	1.22	1
(I) Trustee Rapport Builder	1.42	2	1.00	1	1.58	3.5	1.61	3.5
(O) Govt. Liaison[b]	1.50	3	1.11[b]	3[b]	1.58	3.5	1.91[b]	10.5[b]
(I) Financial Manager[a]	1.67[a]	4.5[a]	1.44[a]	6[a]	2.08[a]	10.5[a]	1.91[a]	10.5[a]
(I) Administrator/Exec.	1.67	4.5	1.44	6	1.67	5.5	1.65	5.5
(I) Visionary[c]	1.75[c]	6.5[c]	1.11	3	1.33[c]	2[c]	1.61	3.5
(I) Consensus Builder[b]	1.75	6.5	1.89[b]	13[b]	1.75	7	1.65[b]	5.5[b]
(I) Faculty Advocate[c]	1.83[c]	8.5[c]	2.11	15	2.25[c]	14[c]	1.96	12
(O) Educational Advocate	1.85	8.5	1.56	8	1.67	5.5	1.78	8
(O) Symbol/Cerem. Official[b]	1.92	10.5	1.78[b]	10[b]	2.16	12.5	2.30[b]	17[b]
(O) Community Leader[a]	1.92[a]	10.5[a]	1.78[a]	10[a]	2.58[a]	15[a]	2.44[a]	15.5[a]
(O) Marketer/Salesperson[b]	2.17	12	1.78[b]	10[b]	2.16	12.5	1.30[b]	2[b]
(O) Fund Raiser	2.33	14	1.89	13	2.09	10.5	2.17	13
(I) Academic Planner[c]	2.33[c]	14[c]	1.44	6	2.00[c]	9[c]	1.78	8
(O) Interinstit. Diplomat[a]	2.33[a]	14[a]	1.89[a]	13[a]	1.92[a]	8[a]	1.78[a]	8[a]
(I) Labor Rltns. Specialist	2.42	16	2.89	17.5	3.00	17	2.22	14
(I) Student Liaison/Mentor	3.33	17.5	2.89	17.5	2.92	16	2.44	15.5
(O) Alumni Advocate	3.33	17.5	3.33	20	3.16	18	2.65	18
(I) Phy. Plt./Ppty. Overseer	3.73	19	2.78	16	3.25	19	2.83	19
(O) Scholar/Teacher	3.75	20	3.00	19	3.42	20	2.87	20

*Listed in order of presidents' rank-order preferences, 1983 survey; "(I)" = presidential roles directed to tasks, constitutencies inside the institution; ("O)" = presidential roles focused outside the institution.

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